



INL Laboratory Director John Grossenbacher answers questions from Sen. Diane Bilyeu and Rep. Bill Killen after testifying before the Idaho Legislature's Joint Economic Outlook and Revenue Assessment Committee.

Idaho lawmakers get INL perspective on economic outlook

By [Marilyn Whitney](#), *INL Communications & Governmental Affairs*

Although Idaho lawmakers are grappling with high unemployment and financial uncertainty, Idaho National Laboratory could be one bright spot in the state's economy.

The Legislature's Joint Economic Outlook and Revenue Assessment Committee (EORAC) convened just ahead of the 2010 legislative session to take the pulse of Idaho's economy. Lab Director John Grossenbacher provided testimony on the laboratory's progress in 2009 and outlook for 2010. His news was encouraging on both fronts.

The legislative committee's mission is to assess Idaho's economy by providing a forum for expert testimony from economists, business leaders and industry spokespeople. It then reviews the governor's revenue projections and provides advice to the legislature about estimated revenues. The two-day meeting included presentations from the state's chief economist, Mike Ferguson, state agencies including the departments of Commerce and Labor, and industry representatives including the Associated General Contractors, Idaho Retailers Association and Micron Technology.

As one of Idaho's largest employers, INL and its 4,100 employees have a significant economic impact on the Gem State. INL experienced 9 percent growth from 2008 to 2009, and achieved business volume of \$870 million, Grossenbacher said. The lab's payroll currently exceeds \$300 million, with the direct and secondary effects of that personal income totaling \$1.1 billion each year.

Grossenbacher cited a number of significant INL events and accomplishments in 2009. They included a new world record for nuclear fuel performance, and the development and demonstration of technology for using nuclear energy to produce hydrogen. INL established a leadership role in developing hybrid energy systems that could boost efficiency by combining several forms of energy generation. He described construction of several new INL facilities and receipt of three R&D 100 Awards, which R&D Magazine bestows on the 100 most promising new technologies each year.

Lawmakers also learned how INL strongly supports education in Idaho. In addition to funding continuing education for INL employees, the lab has given more than \$1.7 million over the last four years to support K-12 programs throughout the state. INL has partnered with Idaho State University and Partners for Prosperity to establish the [Energy Systems Technology Education Center \(ESTEC\)](#), which provides opportunities for students to develop skills specific to the energy industry.

Grossenbacher gave the lawmakers updates on progress of cleanup activities at the [Department of Energy's Idaho site](#) — the [Idaho Cleanup Project](#) and the Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project.

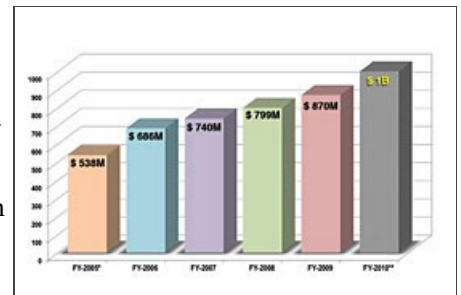
For Fiscal Year 2010, which began Oct. 1, Grossenbacher told legislators that INL expects funding to be similar to 2009 and for laboratory business to approach \$1 billion. Uncertainties at the federal level include formation of a blue ribbon panel to consider options for disposal of spent fuel, which could result in a significant need for more research and development work at INL, he said. He noted that virtually any climate change legislation is likely to benefit nuclear energy and increase the need for the type of research being done at INL.

Grossenbacher closed by asking lawmakers to support INL's role as the national and international leader in nuclear energy research and development.

"INL has an extraordinary role to play in the future of the nation and the world," he said.

View Grossenbacher's [Economic Outlook and Revenue Assessment Committee presentation](#).

Read coverage of the hearing from the [Spokesman Review](#).



INL business volume has grown 9 percent since Fiscal Year 2008 and is projected to reach \$1 billion by FY10.

